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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001348

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA  
DOE FOR GEORGE PERSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/13/2018

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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: BUHARI AIDE ON TRIBUNAL, ELECTORAL

REFORM, YAR'ADUA

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b & d).

11. (C) Summary. Abubakar Buba Galadima (strictly protect), Organizing Secretary for All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) Presidential candidate Buhari, told PolCouns, PolOff, and PolFSN on July 9 that he believed the Nigerian Supreme Court will uphold the 2007 election of President Yar'Adua when it rules later this year. He said Buhari and his supporters are considering breaking with the ANPP and forming a new political party, though they will wait until after the Supreme Court ruling before acting. Galadima was critical of the Electoral Reform Committee (ERC) established by Yar'Adua last year, arguing that it is really a tool of the GON and ruling PDP party, not a real force for reform. He claimed that two recommendations submitted by the PDP will emerge from the ERC: extending the presidential term (including Yar'Adua's current one) to seven years, which we judge unlikely, and the formation of an electoral offenses commission. End Summary.

12. (C) Buba Galadima said he believes that the Supreme Court's judgment will likely endorse President Yar'Adua's election. He implied that General Buhari and his key supporters have already decided to form a new political party which would be distinct in its ideological orientation from the existing 51 political parties. He said changing parties is necessary as Buhari is not on good terms with the ANPP party leadership, including its several state governors, but Buhari believes changing parties before the court ruling would portray him as an unprincipled politician, so he will remain with the ANPP for now. (Comment. We question Galadima's description of the new party as "distinct in its ideological orientation," given that Nigerian political parties largely lack meaningful ideologies, and are built around important personalities. Galadima's explanation that Buhari is "not on good terms" with party leaders, some of whom are angling for an alliance with the ruling party in return for offices, a much more plausible motivation. End Comment.)

13. (C) Galadima said he believes the ERC's recommendations will have no merit because it is chaired by former Chief Justice Uwais, the key jurist involved in endorsing the fraudulent 2003 elections, and a man for whom he and Buhari have little respect. He maintained that Uwais' endorsement of the 2003 elections "encouraged Obasanjo to run a more

fraudulent election in 2007." In addition, he surmised that the ERC is working closely with the government; he noted that the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), which was the last organization to make a presentation at the public hearings, recommended a presidential tenure elongation to seven years with the maximum of two terms and the formation of an electoral offenses commission. Galadima declared, "If the PDP proposal was submitted at the beginning of the hearings, Nigerians would have reacted negatively," particularly to the term-elongation proposal. Instead, no one had the opportunity to disagree with the PDP's recommendations. Galadima said he believes both of these proposals will emerge in the final ERC report. He contended an electoral offenses commission would be used to suppress political opposition, rather than offenses by the PDP.

¶4. (C) Galadima, who has known Yar'Adua since their university days, said he has been disappointed with the conduct of the new administration, describing the President as "docile and ineffective." Despite Yar'Adua's medical problems, he insisted that the President will serve two seven-year terms, 14 years total. He claimed that Yar'Adua and his wife have agreed, "It is better for the President to die in office and receive state burial than die in his hometown, Katsina." Galadima contended that only former President Obasanjo has the resources and political connections to prevent a proposal for tenure extension.

¶5. (C) Comment. The idea of tenure elongation was floated by Senator Saminu Turaki, a member of the Senate Constitution Review Committee, in May 2008; however, it met strong resistance both in the media and from other Senators. While

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it is unclear whether Turaki's suggestion was merely his own or meant to test the waters and judge reaction to the idea, we do not believe tenure elongation stands a chance. Indeed, it is our sense that it would receive the same kind of strongly negative reaction that greeted Obasanjo's effort to amend the constitution to allow him to run for a third term. We also doubt that Yar'Adua is interested in being President for 14 (or perhaps even seven) years. Nonetheless, the mere mention of tenure elongation has clearly made an impression on Galadima. End Comment.  
SANDERS